

## AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

1. (Currently amended) An absorbent composite, comprising one or more fibrous bands in a fibrous base, wherein the base comprises a fibrous matrix and superabsorbent material, wherein the composite has a length, wherein each band is continuous along the composite's entire length, and wherein the bands are substantially free of superabsorbent material.

2. (Canceled)

3. (Original) The composite of Claim 1 wherein the bands are substantially parallel.

4. (Canceled)

5. (Original) The composite of Claim 1 wherein the fibrous matrix comprises fibers selected from the group consisting of resilient fibers, matrix fibers, and mixtures thereof.

6. (Original) The composite of Claim 5 wherein the resilient fibers are selected from the group consisting of chemically stiffened fibers, anfractuous fibers, chemithermomechanical pulp fibers, prehydrolyzed kraft pulp fibers, synthetic fibers, and mixtures thereof.

7. (Original) The composite of Claim 6 wherein the chemically stiffened fibers comprise crosslinked cellulosic fibers.

8. (Original) The composite of Claim 7 wherein the crosslinked cellulosic fibers are crosslinked with a crosslinking agent selected from the group consisting of urea-based and polycarboxylic acid crosslinking agents.

9. (Original) The composite of Claim 6 wherein the synthetic fibers are selected from the group consisting of polyolefin, polyester, polyamide, and thermobondable bicomponent fibers.

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10. (Original) The composite of Claim 9 wherein the polyester fibers are polyethylene terephthalate fibers.

11. (Original) The composite of Claim 5 wherein the matrix fibers comprise cellulosic fibers.

12. (Original) The composite of Claim 11 wherein the cellulosic fibers comprise fibers selected from the group consisting of wood pulp fibers, cotton linters, cotton fibers, hemp fibers, and mixtures thereof.

13. (Original) The composite of Claim 5 wherein the resilient fibers are present in the base in an amount from about 10 to about 60 percent by weight of the total composite.

14. (Original) The composite of Claim 5 wherein the matrix fibers are present in the base in an amount from about 10 to about 50 percent by weight of the total composite.

15. (Canceled)

16. (Previously presented) The composite of Claim 1 wherein the superabsorbent material is selected from the group consisting of superabsorbent particles and superabsorbent fibers.

17. (Previously presented) The composite of Claim 1 wherein the superabsorbent material is present in an amount from about 0.1 to about 80 percent by weight of the total composite.

18. (Previously presented) The composite of Claim 1 wherein the superabsorbent material is present in about 40 percent by weight of the total composite.

19. (Previously presented) The composite of Claim 1 wherein the superabsorbent material absorbs from about 5 to about 100 times its weight in 0.9 percent saline solution.

20. (Original) The composite of Claim 1 further comprising a wet strength agent.

21. (Original) The composite of Claim 20 wherein the wet strength agent is a resin selected from the group consisting of polyamide-epichlorohydrin and polyacrylamide resins.

22. (Original) The composite of Claim 20 wherein the wet strength agent is present in the composite in an amount from about 0.01 to about 2 percent by weight of the total composite.

23. (Original) The composite of Claim 20 wherein the wet strength agent is present in the composite in about 0.25 percent by weight of the total composite.

24. (Original) The composite of Claim 1 having a basis weight of from about 50 to about 1000 g/m<sup>2</sup>.

25. (Original) The composite of Claim 1 having a density of from about 0.02 to about 0.7 g/cm<sup>3</sup>.

26. (Original) The composite of Claim 1 wherein the one or more fibrous bands comprise fibers selected from the group consisting of resilient fibers, matrix fibers, and mixtures thereof.

27. (Original) The composite of Claim 26 wherein the resilient fibers are selected from the group consisting of chemically stiffened fibers, anfractuous fibers, chemithermomechanical pulp fibers, prehydrolyzed kraft pulp fibers, synthetic fibers, and mixtures thereof.

28. (Original) The composite of Claim 27 wherein the chemically stiffened fibers comprise crosslinked cellulosic fibers.

29. (Original) The composite of Claim 28 wherein the crosslinked cellulosic fibers are crosslinked with a crosslinking agent selected from the group consisting of urea-based and polycarboxylic acid crosslinking agents.

30. (Original) The composite of Claim 26 wherein the matrix fibers comprise cellulosic fibers.

31. (Original) The composite of Claim 30 wherein the cellulosic fibers comprise fibers selected from the group consisting of wood pulp fibers, cotton linters, cotton fibers, hemp fibers, and mixtures thereof.

32. (Original) The composite of Claim 30 wherein the cellulosic fibers comprise fluff pulp fibers.

33. (Original) The composite of Claim 30 wherein the cellulosic fibers comprise refined pulp fibers.

34. (Original) The composite of Claim 26 wherein the resilient fibers are present in the composite in an amount from about 15 to about 90 percent by weight of the total composite.

35. (Original) The composite of Claim 26 wherein the matrix fibers are present in the composite in an amount from about 10 to about 85 percent by weight of the total composite.

36-37. (Canceled)

38. (Currently amended) An absorbent article comprising an absorbent composite comprising one or more fibrous bands in a fibrous base, wherein the base comprises a fibrous matrix and superabsorbent material, wherein the composite has a length, wherein each band is continuous along the composite's entire length, and wherein the bands are substantially free of superabsorbent material.

39-40. (Canceled)

41. (Currently amended) An absorbent article comprising:

liquid pervious facing sheet;

a storage layer comprising an absorbent composite comprising one or more fibrous bands in a fibrous base, wherein the base comprises a fibrous matrix and superabsorbent material,

wherein the composite has a length, wherein each band is continuous along the composite's entire length, and wherein the bands are substantially free of superabsorbent material; and  
a liquid impervious backing sheet.

42. (Currently amended) An absorbent article comprising:  
a liquid pervious facing sheet;  
an acquisition layer for rapidly acquiring and distributing liquid;  
a storage layer comprising an absorbent composite comprising one or more fibrous bands in a fibrous base, wherein the base comprises a fibrous matrix and superabsorbent material, wherein the composite has a length, wherein each band is continuous along the composite's entire length, and wherein the bands are substantially free of superabsorbent material; and  
a liquid impervious backing sheet.

43. (Currently amended) An absorbent article comprising:  
a liquid pervious facing sheet;  
an acquisition layer for rapidly acquiring and distributing liquid;  
a storage layer comprising an absorbent composite comprising one or more fibrous bands in a fibrous base, wherein the base comprises a fibrous matrix and superabsorbent material, wherein the composite has a length, wherein each band is continuous along the composite's entire length, and wherein the bands are substantially free of superabsorbent material;  
an intermediate layer interposed between the acquisition layer and the storage layer; and  
a liquid impervious backing sheet.

44. (Original) The absorbent article of Claim 43 wherein the intermediate layer is selected from the group consisting of a liquid pervious tissue and a distribution layer.

45. (Original) The absorbent article of Claim 41 wherein the article is a feminine care product.

46. (Original) The absorbent article of Claim 45 wherein the top sheet is joined to the backing sheet.

47. (Original) The absorbent article of Claim 42 wherein the article is a diaper.

48. (Original) The absorbent article of Claim 47 further comprising leg gathers.

49. (Withdrawn) An absorbent article comprising:

a liquid pervious facing sheet;

an acquisition layer for acquiring and distributing liquid;

a storage layer; and

a liquid impervious backing sheet;

wherein the acquisition layer comprises an absorbent composite comprising one or more fibrous bands in a fibrous base, wherein the base comprises a fibrous matrix and superabsorbent material, wherein the composite has a length, wherein each band is continuous along the composite's entire length, and wherein the bands are substantially free of superabsorbent material.

50. (Withdrawn) The absorbent article of Claim 49 wherein the acquisition layer has a top surface area less than the top surface area of the storage core.

51. (Withdrawn) The absorbent article of Claim 49 wherein the acquisition layer has a top surface area about equal to the top surface area of the storage core.

52. (Withdrawn) The absorbent article of Claim 49 wherein the storage layer comprises superabsorbent material.

53. (Withdrawn) The absorbent article of Claim 49 wherein the storage layer comprises an absorbent composite comprising one or more fibrous bands in a fibrous base, wherein the base comprises a fibrous matrix and superabsorbent material, and wherein the bands are substantially free of superabsorbent material.

54. (Withdrawn) The absorbent article of Claim 49 wherein the article is a diaper.
55. (Withdrawn) The absorbent article of Claim 49 further comprising leg gathers.
- 56-73. (Canceled)

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